



Brazilian/Colombian Rainbow Boa *Epicrates cenchira*

- Rainbow boas range from the southern portion of Central America, throughout much of South America including the Amazon basin.
- Primarily a terrestrial boa. The most commonly kept subspecies are the Brazilian Rainbow Boa (*E. cenchira cenchira*) and the Colombian Rainbow Boa (*E. cenchira maurus*).
- Rainbow boas are known for their iridescent and colorful skin and scales, which reflect patterns of light similar to a prism.
- A reddish to reddish orange snake with large lighter orange blotches outlined in black. Has black and cream colored spots along the side resembling “bulls eyes”. The Colombian species has more obscured or faded patterning on an orangish, brown, to orange-brown ground color.
- If provided the proper care, Rainbow boas can attain longevity of 20-25 years or more.

Size

Ranges from 8-12 inches as neonates, and 5-6 feet (36-72 inches) for most adults.

Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Neonate rainbow boas can be housed in a 15-20 gallon terrarium or plastic enclosure. Adult rainbow boas should be housed in a minimum of a 40-50 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Rainbow boas will thrive on a substrate of newspaper, cage liner material, sphagnum, or cypress mulch. Do not use pine or cedar shavings, as these substrates are toxic to snakes. Provide a large water bowl or dish and a hide box at all times in the enclosure. Artificial foliage, driftwood, and other cage furnishings can provide additional security.

Humidity is important with rainbow boas, although the Colombian subspecies is more tolerant of lower humidity than Brazilians. Too much ventilation will result in humidity loss. Create a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter. Overhead, incandescent lighting can also be used, but is not required for rainbow boas (which are primarily nocturnal). Ideal temperatures for these boas range from 75-80 degrees F on the cool side and 86-92 degrees F on the warm side.

Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least once per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2-3 months.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, rainbow boas will prey upon rodents and other small mammals, lizards, and small birds.

Most neonates can be started off on hopper mice or fuzzy rats once per week. Food items can gradually be increased as needed. Most adult rainbow boas can be fed small to medium adult rats once every 5-7 days. A general rule of thumb to follow when feeding snakes is to provide prey items that are approximately the same width as the widest point of the snake.

Handling

As with many snakes, young and juvenile rainbow boas may initially be nervous and defensive. They may coil and strike if they feel threatened or defensive. Handle your rainbow boa gently and deliberately, but do not drop or injure the animal. Many rainbow boas will become docile and more tolerant or accustomed to handling as they become older.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****